

OBSERVATIONS OF PREDATION ON LEPIDOPTERA IN ALASKA

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DURING THE SUMMER OF 1975, J. W. and Hazel I. Tilden spent several weeks of field work in Alaska, mostly in the north-central area, and on several occasions noted predation on butterflies and moths by both birds and predatory insects.

Along the Steese Highway, and along roads in the vicinity of Fairbanks, unbelievable numbers of the geometrid moth, *Eulype hastata* (L.), assembled on the moist soil of roadside ditches. Often the surface was gray with them, and they were sitting so close together that their wings touched. When disturbed they fluttered up in clouds. Birds, particularly robins, were observed to gather beakfuls of these moths, fly away, presumably to their nests, and return shortly to take more.

Robins, wheatears, and lapland longspurs were frequently noted foraging on the open tundra, and returning from time to time to their nests with beakfuls of insects, including both moths and butterflies. On different occasions, these birds were seen to forage a short distance in front of us, as though waiting to capture such insects as we might disturb. At Eagle Summit, on the Steese Highway, a specimen of *Erebia youngi* Holland was taken that showed a well-defined beak mark on its left forewing, and a specimen of *Erebia epipsodea* showed a beak mark and some tearing, on the left hindwing.

While collecting at Ester Dome, in the vicinity of Fairbanks, Hazel Tilden disturbed a specimen of *Boloria* (Nymphalidae) which flew a short distance and settled. She noted a large wasp fly by, and saw the butterfly rise slightly and settle again. When she reached the spot where she had marked the butterfly down, she found that the wasp had caught the butterfly and was tearing it to pieces. Both the wasp and the butterfly prey were collected and preserved. The wasp proved to be a female of *Vespa arenae* (Fabricius). The butterfly is a specimen of *Boloria chariclea butleri* (Edwards).